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ABSTRACT

This brief summary report provides data on differences in starting salaries of college graduates and the related changing demands of the labor market. The report notes that: (1) between 1977 and 1993 computer sciences and engineering graduates had much higher starting salaries than graduates in all other fields of study; (2) while starting salaries for humanities and education graduates have varied over time, generally they were considerably lower than starting salaries for all graduates; (3) among 1993 graduates females were more likely than males to major in education, and males were more likely than females to major in computer sciences and engineering; (4) the most common field of study for both males and females was business; and (5) median starting salaries for 1993 male graduates were higher than those for females. Two tables provide data for percentage difference between median starting salaries for all graduates versus graduates in particular fields of study for the years 1977-93, and annual median starting salaries of 1993 graduates by sex and major field of study; starting salaries of college graduates by field of discipline are graphed. (CH)

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INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

June 1997

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Starting salaries of college graduates

One of the values that students place on the field of study they choose for their bachelor's degree is the earning potential associated with occupations in that field. Starting salaries offered by employers are related not only to the value of the skills learned by college graduates but also to the supply of qualified individuals. Thus, differences in starting salaries shed light on the changing demands of the labor market and the response of students and the education system to those changes.

- **Between 1977 and 1993, college graduates who majored in computer sciences and engineering had much higher starting salaries than did graduates in all other fields of study; while the salary benefit of majoring in such fields was high, it declined between 1980 and 1993.**
- **Starting salaries among graduates who majored in the humanities or education have fluctuated over time, but in general, they were considerably lower than the starting salaries for all graduates. Salaries in both fields, however, rose relative to those of all graduates between 1984 and 1993.**
- **Among 1993 graduates, females were much more likely than males to major in education, and males were more likely than females to major in computer sciences and engineering; the most common field of study for both males and females was business. The starting salary benefits for those who majored in business increased between 1986 and 1993.**
- **Median starting salaries for 1993 male graduates were substantially higher than those for female graduates, both overall and within certain fields of study including business, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences.**

Percentage difference between median starting salaries for all college graduates and college graduates in particular major fields of study: Selected years of graduation 1977–93

Major field of study	Year of graduation					
	1977	1980	1984	1986	1990	1993
	Percent above or (below) median for all college graduates					
Humanities	(20.3)	(15.4)	(18.6)	(17.1)	(13.6)	(11.1)
Social and behavioral sciences	(10.6)	(11.4)	(12.6)	(8.8)	(9.4)	(9.0)
Natural sciences	(1.8)	(0.8)	(5.0)	(6.2)	(1.8)	(7.5)
Computer sciences and engineering	46.4	61.0	44.8	34.3	41.0	35.8
Education	(14.1)	(18.6)	(20.1)	(18.6)	(11.7)	(15.3)
Business and management	14.4	13.2	4.8	2.6	4.6	10.4
Other professional or technical	2.8	6.8	(1.3)	(2.9)	2.2	3.3

Annual median starting salaries (in 1995 constant dollars) of 1993 college graduates, by sex and major field of study, and the percentage difference between male and female starting salaries

Major field of study	All graduates	Male		Female		Percent female/male difference
		Percent in field	Median salary	Percent in field	Median salary	
Total	**$22,968**	**100**	**$25,423**	**100**	**$21,401**	***(15.8)**
Humanities	20,413	9	21,210	12	20,062	(5.4)
Social and behavioral sciences	20,903	13	22,710	15	20,025	*(11.8)
Natural sciences	21,248	7	23,578	6	19,959	*(15.3)
Computer sciences and engineering	31,187	16	31,518	3	29,348	(6.9)
Education	19,450	6	20,668	17	19,125	(7.5)
Business and management	25,347	32	26,986	23	23,165	*(14.2)
Other professional or technical	23,731	17	23,711	23	23,746	0.1

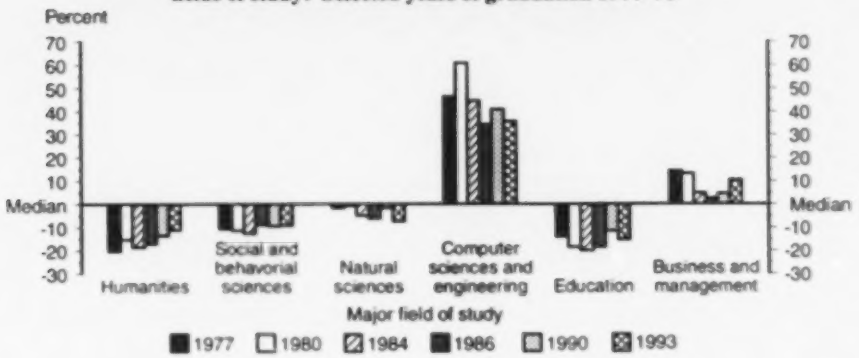
* Male salaries greater than female salaries ($p<0.05$).

NOTE: Data presented pertain to bachelor's degree recipients who were working full time and who were not enrolled in postsecondary education 1 year after graduation.

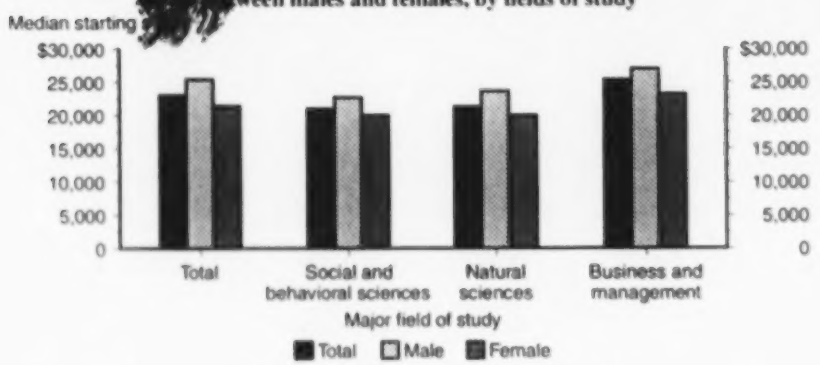
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Recent College Graduates Surveys (1977–90) and 1993 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, First Follow-up (B&B:93/94).

Starting salaries of college graduates

Percentage difference between median starting salaries for college graduates in all fields and college graduates in particular major fields of study: Selected years of graduation 1977–93



Median annual starting salaries (in 1995 constant dollars) of 1993 college graduates with measurable starting salary differences between males and females, by fields of study



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